

AIRGRAM

POL 33-4 (COL-VER)

L-4

RS/R	REP	AF	ARA
1	1		10
EUR	FE	NEA	CU

Original to be Filed in _____ Decentralized Files.

FILE DESIGNATION

INR	E	P	IO
5	4		5
L	FBO	AID	

HANDLING INDICATOR

~~LIMITED OFFICIAL USE~~RECEIVED A-273
DEPARTMENT OF STATE NO.

TO : Department of State

JUN 25 8 32 AM 1970

GD/H

INFO : AmEmbassy CARACAS, CINCSO (for POLAD and J-2), AmConsuls BARRANQUILLA, CALI, MEDELLIN ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : AmEmbassy BOGOTA

DATE: June 19, 1970

SUBJECT : Colombian-Venezuelan Negotiations on Territorial Sea

REF :

An agreement was signed in Bogota on March 14, 1970 which set the groundwork for the meeting of Colombian and Venezuelan delegations on June 8 in Caracas to discuss territorial sea questions. The discussion lasted for five days and ended with an agreement to continue the meeting in Bogota on September 7. The Colombian Delegation Head, Minister of Mines, Gustavo ARRIETA, denied sensational press stories of disagreement and stated that the discussion had been completely cordial.

José Maria DE GUZMAN, Acting Subsecretary for Foreign Policy, in a conversation with an Embassy Officer said that the discussions between Venezuela and Colombia did not reach a conclusion, but they were not a failure as presented in the press. He lamented the fact that press reports from Venezuela had speculated on the failure of the talks, and put President Caldera in a situation that forced him to take a somewhat "hard line" publicly on Venezuelan claims. De Guzman said he trusted that an agreement could be reached on an amicable basis, in the spirit of the Sochagata declaration of last year when President Caldera visited Colombia. (A-383 of August 22, 1969).

He said that Colombia wanted to treat the question as a juridical matter and avoid the "petrolization" of the issue. He admitted that, compared to 20 years ago, modern technology made more possible the exploitation of sea resources, and implied that technological developments had thus brought to the surface the need for resolution of this unsettled question between Colombia and Venezuela. These same developments, he said, had made the Geneva Law of the Sea

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

1970 JUN 25 PM 3
COPYFLO-PBR

POST ROUTING

TO:	Action	Info.	Initials
AMB/PO			
DCM			
POL			
ECON			
CONS			
ADM			
AID			
USIS			
FILE			

Action Taken:

Date:

Initials:

FORM 10-64 DS-323

~~LIMITED OFFICIAL USE~~

For Department Use Only

☒ In ☐ Out

Drafted by: POL/WCSergeant

Drafting Date: 6-19-70

Phone No.: 240

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL/EHLubensky

Clearances:

ECON/BHemenway (in draft)

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 2 BOGOTA 'S A-273

Conventions obsolete, especially with regard to sovereignty over the continental shelf.

Dr. de Guzman denied that the designation of the Minister of Mines and Petroleum as head of the Colombian delegation indicated Colombian interest in possible petroleum resources there; the Minister of Mines, he insisted, was an expert in the matter of the boundary problem. He pointed out there were at least three diplomats on the delegation (Carlos HOLGUIN, Ambassador to the OAS, Jose Joaquin GORI, Planning Office of the Foreign Ministry, Major Julio LONDOÑO, Chief of the Office of Boundaries in the Foreign Ministry) as well as a representative of the Colombian mapping agency, the Instituto Augustin Codazzi.

Dr. de Guzman said that the problem between Colombia and Venezuela about their respective territorial sea claims concerned what rule should be used to delineate the extension of the land boundary into the territorial sea. He stated that Colombia accepted and wanted to use the median line system adopted at the Geneva Law of the Sea Conference. He pointed out that Venezuela's position was that the Gulf of Venezuela was an internal sea and that, therefore, the amount of territorial sea accorded each country should be proportional to the shore already under the sovereignty of each. Dr. de Guzman admitted that submission of the matter to the International Court of Justice or another arbitrator was possible, but was not contemplated as yet.

It has been ascertained, in conversations with local oil company executives, that the international oil companies have not been exerting pressure on the Colombian Government in regard to Gulf of Venezuela oil concessions. The companies, in fact, are waiting for the Ministry of Mines to call on them to discuss the matter. In general, they are not pushing for any kind of action.

Cities Service has pending before the Colombian Ministry of Mines and Petroleum a half dozen or so concession applications for offshore areas in the Gulf of Venezuela. The areas are directly east of the Guajira Department, from the juncture of Colombia and Venezuela land territory in that region, and extend to the north. Superior Oil Co. also has a number of pending offshore applications in the Gulf of Venezuela but the areas Superior applied for lie to the north of Cities Service's application. United Fruit has overfiled on a part of the seas sought by Cities Service. These are the only

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 3 BOGOTA'S A-273

concession applications in the Gulf of Venezuela and some of the applications have been on file as much as ten years, according to Cities Service. The Ministry has not called the applicants to contract because of the unsettled territorial sea issue between Colombia and Venezuela.

Cities Service has done seismic studies in the Gulf, as has Ecopetrol (Colombian state oil company) and the Venezuelan state oil company. Cities Service has purchased the Venezuelan studies, which are openly for sale to interested parties. Cities Service considers the seismic data very encouraging. It believes oil can be found in the Gulf, and that the Gulf of Maracaibo structure may be repeated in the gulf of Venezuela. Of course, these are largely conjectures and hopes, because the territory cannot be proved without drilling.

COMMENT

The fact that the Colombian Government has been active in initiating negotiations with the Venezuelan Government is probably a personal decision of President Lleras, although Minister Arrieta is also most interested in the question. It is possible that President Lleras has taken action at this time because he believes Colombian-Venezuelan relations are more amicable than during former periods. However, the recent meeting in Caracas does not appear to have produced much more than the placing on record of the two opposing views, with circumstantial evidence indicating that there may have been a hardening of position on the part of both countries.

We suspect the Colombians are thinking of possible petroleum in the area, and the designation of the Minister of Mines and Petroleum, in spite of what the Foreign Ministry says, is too obvious for denial.


VAUGHNCONFIDENTIAL